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ABSTRACT

This special education research brief provides a synopsis of the steps in curriculum-based assessment (CBA) and lists resources that provide more detail on the method and applications of CBA. The described CBA method involves selecting or developing a method of measurement, assessing student knowledge, tailoring instruction to student needs, and using repeated assessments to fine tune instruction and track progress. The 20 bibliographic resources listed are arranged in four categories: general information and CBA models; measuring, recording, and analyzing student data; tailoring instruction; and using CBA data. (JDD)

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ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE ON HANDICAPPED AND GIFTED CHILDREN

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RESEARCH BRIEF FOR TEACHERS

CURRICULUM-BASED ASSESSMENT

BRIEF T2
DECEMBER 1988

Over the past several years, a large body of research has accrued on the uses and techniques of curriculum-based assessment (CBA). Although its primary importance is as a tool for instructional planning and decision-making, this approach to collecting data on student performance supplies information that also can be used to support referrals to special education, determine appropriate placement, and document special education effectiveness. CBA data provides clear information for communicating with parents and administrators, and provides data for IEP meetings by summarizing the student's present level of performance, suggesting goals and objectives, and documenting pupil progress. Research indicates that, when used for instruction, CBA can lead to greater student achievement. This brief will provide a synopsis of the steps in curriculum-based assessment and a list of resources that provide more detail on the method and applications of CBA.

Curriculum-based assessment incorporates the school's curriculum with "best practice" teaching techniques: It provides the data needed to determine precisely what the student knows, where he or she should be in the curriculum, and when he or she is ready for the next lesson. It results in a record of performance that indicates whether the student is progressing in accordance with the goals established for him or her. The four steps below introduce the basic CBA method.

SELECT OR DEVELOP A METHOD OF MEASUREMENT

CBA relies on repeated measurements of a student's performance in a sequenced curriculum. The method of measurement must be quick, simple, and easy to use, and it must directly reflect the skill or behavior the student is to learn. A measurement method can be developed for any curriculum material. The method may be designed by the teacher or selected from various methods created through research. One method frequently used when CBA is applied to reading instruction is to have the student read for one minute from the appropriate level of the text and score the number of words accurately read.

ASSESS STUDENT KNOWLEDGE

The first CBA assessment is used to identify where in the curriculum materials the student should begin and exactly what he or she needs to learn. The student's score is recorded, usually on a graph that has dates on the x-axis and increasing scores on the y-axis.

For example, a student who needed special help in reading was asked to read from a story that matched his apparent reading level. The teacher also had a copy of the story and marked the words read incorrectly on that copy. Scoring revealed that the student knew only about one-third of the words in the story; he needed to increase his reading skills before he could work with the text.

TAILOR INSTRUCTION TO STUDENT NEEDS

The CBA data is used to identify what the student needs to learn. Some principles proposed by one CBA model are:

- *When preparing lessons, aim for small, steady increments of growth.* It is better for the student to successfully learn a little each day than to learn a lot of material one day and be unsuccessful in attempting the same amount the next day.
- *Control the rate at which new information is presented.* In preparing each lesson, build on what the student already knows and incorporate a small amount of new material into material that has already been learned.
- *Develop accuracy and fluency through drill and practice before presenting new material in context.* Examine the lesson's content first and prepare items for drill. After the drill, present the material in context (e.g., reading from the text).

In the example, the curriculum was adapted for the student. Stories were written to control the ratio of known to unknown words. The stories were sequenced so that the new words were slowly introduced and then reviewed in later stories.

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USE REPEATED ASSESSMENTS TO FINE-TUNE INSTRUCTION AND TRACK PROGRESS

CBA measurements are repeated frequently, usually weekly. In the example, the assessments were repeated every other day and incorporated with the student's reading lesson. The student's progress graph showed that he was learning six to seven new words per day; only eight adapted stories were required to bring him to the point where he could study from the textbook. The teacher reviewed the text ahead and drilled this student when necessary. Within 3 weeks, he was able to read the book and keep up a satisfactory performance level.

Analysis of the student's performance not only tells the teacher whether the student is progressing as expected, but also can provide feedback on the effectiveness of the instructional techniques used and serve as an aid in analyzing the student's learning problems. As progress graphs are completed, they create a record of the student's achievement during the school year, providing information on realistic goals and expectations for the student.

RESOURCES

General Information and CBA Models

Auerbach, S. (1986). Data based cooperative planning: A proposal for mainstreamed remediation of learning disabled students. *British Columbia Journal of Special Education, 10*(1), 37-47. (ERIC No. EJ 335 819)

Gickling, E. E., & Thompson, V. P. (1985). A personal view of curriculum-based assessment. *Exceptional Children, 52*(3), 205-218 (Special Issue on Curriculum-Based Assessment).

Howell, K. W., & Morehead, M. K. (1987). Curriculum-based evaluation in remedial and special education. Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill.

Idol, L., Nevin, A., & Paolucci-Whitcomb, P. (1986). *Models of curriculum-based assessment.* Rockville, MD: Aspen Publishers, Inc.

Marston, D., & Magnusson, D. (1985). Implementing curriculum-based measurement in special and regular education settings. *Exceptional Children, 52*(3), 266-276 (Special Issue on Curriculum-Based Assessment).

Peterson, J., Heistad, D., Peterson, D., & Reynolds, M. (1985). Montevideo individualized prescriptive instructional management system. *Exceptional Children, 52*(3), 239-243 (Special Issue on Curriculum-Based Assessment).

Rosenfeld, S., & Rubinson, F. (1985). Introducing curriculum-based assessment through consultation. *Exceptional Children, 52*(3), 282-287 (Special Issue on Curriculum-Based Assessment)

Tucker, J. A. (1985). Curriculum-based assessment: An introduction. *Exceptional Children, 52*(3), 199-204 (Special Issue on Curriculum-Based Assessment).

Wesson, Caren and others. (1984). The effects of technically adequate instructional data on achievement. *Remedial and Special Education, 5*(5), 17-22. (ERIC No. EJ 308 344)

Measuring, Recording, and Analyzing Student Data

Coulter, W. A. (1985). Implementing curriculum-based assessment: Considerations for pupil appraisal professionals. *Exceptional Children, 52*(3), 277-281 (Special Issue on Curriculum-Based Assessment).

Deno, S. L. (1985). Curriculum-based measurement: The emerging alternative. *Exceptional Children, 52*(3), 219-232 (Special Issue on Curriculum-Based Assessment).

Fuchs, L. S. (1987). Program development. *TEACHING Exceptional Children, 20*(1), 42-44.

Germann, G., & Tindal, G. (1985). An application of curriculum-based assessment: The use of direct and repeated measurement. *Exceptional Children, 52*(3), 244-265 (Special Issue on Curriculum-Based Assessment).

Shinn, M. R., Ysseldyke, J. E., Deno, S. L., & Tindal, G. A. (1986). A comparison of differences between students labeled learning disabled and low achieving on measures of classroom performance. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 19*(9), 545-552 (ERIC No. EJ 345 425).

Tindal, G. (1987). Graphing performance. *TEACHING Exceptional Children, 21*(1), 44-46.

Tailoring Instruction

Blankenship, C. S. (1985). Using curriculum-based assessment data to make instructional decisions. *Exceptional Children, 52*(3), 233-238 (Special Issue on Curriculum-Based Assessment).

Deno, S. L. and others. (1985-86). Direct and frequent curriculum-based measurement: An alternative for educational decision making. *Special Services in the Schools, 2*(2-3), 5-27. (ERIC No. EJ 340 066)

Gickling, E. E. (1984, October 4-6). *Operationalizing academic learning time for low achieving and handicapped mainstreamed students.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Northern Rocky Mountain Educational Research Association (2nd), Jackson Hole, WY. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 256 115)

Gickling, E. E., & Havertape, J. (undated). Curriculum based assessment. In James A. Tucker (Ed.), *Non-test based assessment.* Available from Educational Directions, Inc., P.O. Box 4471, Austin, TX 78765. ($45.00)

Uses of CBA Data

Marston, D., Mirkin, P., & Deno, S. (1984). Curriculum-based measurement: An alternative to traditional screening, referral, and identification. *Journal of Special Education, 18*(2), 109-117. (ERIC No. EJ 308 409)

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